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## **A Rare Illinois Indian Flint Artifact**

By Dr. Henry M. Whelpley, St. Louis, Mo.

**Shape.** The double pointed outline of the piece is well shown in the illustration (plat). The two surfaces are convex and the entire artifact very symmetrical. It gradually tapers in width and thickness from the center of both diameters. The circumference is a dull cutting edge.

**Size.** Twenty inches long, three and three-fourths inches wide and one inch thick at center.

**Weight.** Forty-three ounces.

**Material.** Novaculite evidently from the ancient Indian quarry near Kaolin, Union County, Illinois. The ends of the piece are translucent but the center is of the opaque material.

**Color.** A rich fawn, artistically sprinkled with lighter specks and various sized darker reddish-brown spots and stripes. The fawn colored patina is due to oxidation of the iron in the material, as a result of long exposure of the chipped surface which was originally of a pale cream color.

**Condition.** A few small flakes have resulted from contact with the modern plow and harrow but the piece gives no evidence of rough usage by its prehistoric owners.

**Age.** The entire surface indicates much handling and long continued oxidation. The piece seems to be very old but I hesitate in suggesting even an approximate date.

**Workmanship.** The Kaolin quarry material works easily and the mechanic was very skillful. The flaking is equal to that of an exceptionally well made flint spade.

**Location.** This piece was plowed up in a field on a small creek bottom which had been under cultivation about half a century.

**Date of Discovery.** It was found, July 7, 1899, near the Kaolin Indian flint quarry (Union County, Illinois,) from which the material was obtained.

Comment. The nomenclature used in American Archaeology is empirical and vague but those familiar with the flint artifacts of this country usually find little difficulty in placing each piece in some general group.

The handiwork of an aboriginal artisan which is described above is a *sui generis* that does not fit in any known group of Indian flint relics. It is out of place among flint spades and looks strange in company with the largest flint cutting implements. I have been able to locate but one other similiar flint piece. It is in the museum of the state of Nebraska, at Lincoln.

After sixteen years of study of the pieces in my collection, I still hesitate in pronouncing a positive opinion. I am inclined to believe, however, that this piece and the one in Nebraska were both made for and used as ceremonials in a manner similar to the known use of the obsidian blades of northern California. The Illinois and the Nebraska specimens are much like obsidian blades in outline which also occur of considerable length. (I have two obsidians, each thirty inches long.)